

PHOTOGRAPHS BY 1977-1978 C. A. P. S. FELLOWS

July 15 - August 4, 1978

WHITNEY MUSEUM OF AMERICAN ART  
DOWNTOWN BRANCH



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This exhibition brings together works by each of the nineteen CAPS Fellowship recipients in photography for 1977-78. These artists have been awarded financial assistance to create new works or to complete work in progress. The Creative Arts Public Service Program makes these awards annually, with the assistance of public and private funds, to New York State artists in a range of media. Each artist contributes to the CAPS Community Service Program through participation in exhibitions, performances, lectures, readings, or workshops or through donations of work to public collections.

The photographs selected for this exhibition represent the kind of work for which each artist was chosen for a CAPS award.

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Perhaps the most important element contributing to what we see when we look at a photograph is our recognition of the image as a photograph in the first place. The fact that a picture is a photograph brings into play a whole train of implications and many categories of knowledge. Included are not only those things we know about picture-taking with a camera and the process whereby prints or transparencies result but also things we know about what we can see in the picture itself: the people, places, and things of this world. The fact of a photograph, whatever is contained within the rectangle that shapes its boundaries, appeared to the camera in that particular way from some real place at a certain moment stopped in real time. For Martin Schneider, who describes his activity as that of "documentation for social change," there is no serious alternative to the medium of photography. The powerful impact of Pollution Death Day and the fact that such images could stand as evidence in a court of law depend on the particular relation of a photograph to what it shows: an unaltered picture depicts something that must have really existed. A photograph is documentary proof. There can be no argument against the reality of what it shows.

Certain kinds of photographs can give us a heightened awareness of the event-like aspect of the act of picture-taking. A photograph which shows an action, an event, an incident, or a happening highlights its own temporality. There are certain things that simply don't last very long, things that cannot be anticipated--even if you are looking for pictures.

In the work of Laurence Miller and Douglas Sandhage one gets the feeling that there simply was no time to "make" a picture. Notions



of careful and thoughtful compositional control, of premeditation and previsualization seem inappropriate to these photos. The configuration or event that triggered the picture-taking impulse materialized too quickly and unexpectedly.

Miller's Broadway and Cambridge, Mass. produce the strong sense of the photographer as off balance, jolted, and lunging at his quarry with the camera. The movement is evident in the pictures: in Cambridge, Mass. the image is not simply blurred, it reveals a sharp jerk at the moment of exposure. Miller's pictures read as active, almost aggressive responses to things that jolt, that stun, that leap out of the periphery.

In Sandhage's pieces there is also the sense of fast shooting. All picture-taking can be thought of as a complex kind of pointing--an ostensive act that involves both the camera itself and the frame that will contain a certain dense chunk of visual information. But in Sandhage's work, as in Miller's, the camera becomes an instrument in the hands of a marksman moving through a field of moving targets. The sighting of a target forces the shot. It can't be a moment for getting involved with the aesthetics of the rectangle. Parts of things appear from all sides, neither wholly included nor wholly excluded by the frame. Presumably, what is important about any picture is what is there and not what isn't. But a particularly striking, revealing, or resonant fragment can ripple with social, psychological or cultural significance.

In Louis Faurer's work, people are framed within a context by the photographer into an isolated tableau. Though only faces are in sharp focus, we are given enough "background" information to read these pictures as fragments of a narrative. One could speculate about the lives of these people and the circumstances of the photograph. Despite this availability of contextual information, ambiguity and indeterminacy pervade these pictures. In Penn Station, the attitude and position of the figures in the context suggests certain possibilities without generating any real conviction as to exactly what is going on. Is it a moment of parting or reunion, evasion or persuasion?

Human gestures, postures, the placement of a hand, the inflection of eyes and mouth can be among the most revealing indices of personal reality in pictures. They can also be indeterminate indicators, leaving open a wide range of possible interpretations.

An interesting set of contrasts to Faurer's photographic posture toward human subjects exist in Roger Haile's work and in Shawn



Walker's. Haile's photos are composed into large groups within richly evocative hand colored borders making the entire piece more like a collage of which single photographs are elements. In his Collaboration with Second Grade Children, the photographs appear to have been taken at fairly close range each child looking squarely, knowingly, and comfortably out at us. They are obviously the result of a collaboration. These photos impress us as being part of something--the children are not simply subjects of the camera or of the photographer's scrutiny--they are as much involved and engaged in the picture-making as the photographer himself. Perhaps the whole construction was made and decorated as part of a game--an activity of shared play and delight.

In Shawn Walker's two pictures that involve human subjects the figures appear indirectly, as one among many elements in a complex pictorial scheme. No figure is given so much space or weight that it subverts the pictorial structure or dominates the content of the image as a whole. The rectangular format of the photograph exerts an inescapable pressure on whatever appears within its borders. Over and above displaying and containing the visual information and detail available to the camera from a particular vantage point, the rectangle also structures and organizes that information.

There are some pictures, like Lilo Raymond's Bed that strike us as being clearly and simply pictures of the thing they show. It is as if the camera were a finger pointing, "That was grandma's bed when she was a little girl." But pointing and shooting with a camera results in an image, a physical, pictorial object. It reveals a particular point of view, adjoining space, eye level, as well as the density of visual detail that results from the particular direction and intensity of light falling on the forms contained within the frame. The bed is photographed from the side, the way you might approach it to lie down. It is photographed from an intimate distance--not more than a few steps away. The photograph creates images rather than reproduces objects.

A concern with the shaping of areas internal to the frame is a feature that links the work of Jan Groover, David Horton, Jean Cartier, and Colin Greenly. The three elements of Groover's Still Life form a triptych--a work unified by carefully controlled alignments and color matching. The soft-focused background shapes form into an abstract setting for the unabashedly exhibitionist flower staged in the foreground. The continuity of background colors links the three images. There is no repetition, but there is no incident either. The flower is not seen in quite the same way in each frame but it is recognizably



the same flower. These are very much color pictures, as are Leonard Jen shel's: they are conceived not simply as arrangements of things with particular contours, associations, and positions within a setting but also within a palette. Color in these pictures is not an additive element; instead, it is constitutive of the very idea of the image. Color is integral to the conception of the picture.

In Horton's two-panel sequences, we seem to have juxtapositions of interior and exterior or natural and architectural environments. What is striking is the appearance of elements that form themselves into shapes and lines in the picture as opposed to designated things that can be readily recognized and identified. It may take some looking to decide which way is up. And we may end up wondering whether this is indeed decidable on the basis of the picture alone. Here we are almost to the point where photographs completely leave off their earthly origins as referential traces. The gulf between what we know of the world and what we can see in a picture can widen beyond the limits of intelligibility. But these pictures do not go that far. Instead we are left with a conceptual tension, attempting to reconcile the way these elements are organized and structured in the picture with the way they would have to be in that particular piece of the world. Colin Greenly's works resist such an attempt at mental reconstruction because of an entirely non-natural and highly ambiguous entity that appears as a line in an otherwise unproblematic landscape. We can't identify this addition to the picture as a material or even optical entity of any familiar kind. This problematic situation is reinforced by Greenly's own description of his pieces as being of "unspecified dimensions," executed in an "unspecified medium" and merely "Presented by means of photo emulsion." There is no way of finding out more--we are seeing all that can be seen in the picture. Is it to be regarded as in the site at all? Is it abstract or concrete, literal or metaphorical, linear or planar? The photograph leaves the issue unresolved.

Light and the way it falls gives visible structure to objects and surface textures, as well as creating two enormously fascinating kinds of purely optical entities: shadows and reflections. In Cartier's work the sculptural, massive quality of his landscape subjects is contrasted to equally dense but purely nonmaterial structures created by light alone.

The visual detail available to the eye in Chris George's pictures seem almost inexhaustible. The tangible quality of surfaces becomes almost directly accessible to vision. These pictures seem to straddle



the borderline dividing the desire to document the infinite detail of how things actually looked at particular moments, and a selection of subjects and perspective that has a more personal or private motive. They are expositions both of subject for its own sake and quality of experience.

Lilo Raymond's involvement with light makes her photograph studies in the shades of white. On the unmade bed in Amagansett, the white sunlight creates white shapes on white sheets, seeming even to mark a woman's profile on the pillow. Light comes through the cracks, spills onto sensuous surfaces, and permeates textures, grains, and folds. There is an intimacy here that is due to the familiarity of things bound up with private interiors. Though people are absent, these are scenes of human presence, activity, perhaps drama. The contrast with Raymond's work is seen in Cartier's Butte Near Hanksville, Utah, where camera placement and angle are involved in making a picture show the awesome magnitude and mystery of things seen from a distance.

Both Ralph Gibson and Don Myer present pictures taken in a very shallow space, with the camera oriented to and framing a surface in such a way that everything that appears in the picture occurs upon and within the single plane of the flat surface which it shows. This in effect eliminates any direct information about how objects and camera are situated relative to an horizon or ground plane. We are approaching a kind of space, in these pictures, that is no space at all. There is no visual access through the frame. This is the inscriptional space of a page of text, for example, which is coextensive with the surface on which the text is inscribed. It is also the kind of space in which decorative patterns are conceived. The borders of the frame cannot be read as designating a spatial container for things or framing a particular group of figures deployed on a ground. Still, Gibson's pictures are instantly recognizable as walls. The pictures are reductive and minimal, insofar as our awareness of what is not there in these images makes us look that much harder at what is there. What has been eliminated amounts to something like a catalogue of the presuppositions and strategies of pictorial image-making: perspective, orientation to an horizon, figure/ground relationships, internal differentiation of foreground and background. These segments of masonry surface are presented as inert, stable, and without shape or dimension.

But there is an enormous, inexhaustible density of incident in these pictures, if one can allow them to continue "working" past the point where they are identified as wall fragments. They can alert us, as well as any in the exhibition, to the elusiveness of the notion of "information" as applied to photographs. The conceivability of making a finite inventory of all there is to see in a photograph stands in no simple relation



to our ability to identify and name the things we see.

Don Myer's pictures produce an ambiguity of spatial orientation by getting up so close to something that it can no longer be placed or located in a larger ambient space. Again we have the associations of this kind of "flatness" with abstract painting and decorative surfaces. Yet we can recognize objects--the remnants of kitchen preparations in two of the pictures, objects resembling cotton balls in the other. These pictures present things, but not so much in space as on surfaces tipped up onto the vertical as if preparing for the wall on which the image will hang. They also play on the possibility of being seen as purely abstract images, as designs, while providing sufficient internal evidence for us to see these homely scraps for what they are.

Knowing what a photograph is a picture of may depend on more than the internal evidence and detail provided within the picture itself. Captions and labels have had a long association with photographs. Descriptive language is used in conjunction with photos not only to tell where and when the picture was made, to identify the subject of the photograph, or provide a narrative context but also to point out, outline, or re-mark what is there. Captions are often used to inform and direct the viewer so that the profusion of visual fact does not obscure the intended function of the photo as a document of specific import.

In Martin Schneider's pictures, the descriptive information serves to tell us what we are seeing and also, in Pollution Death Day, to point out that something is visible that we may not otherwise notice.

Richard Margolis's night landscapes present us with another kind of tension between what we see in a photograph and the visual knowledge of the world that we bring to our looking at photographs. Learning the visual cues to texture constitutes an important part of our knowledge of objects and materials. Part of the reason photographs are a standard of realistic representation is the unsurpassed accuracy with which it is possible to graphically reproduce the visual quality of surfaces. The other-worldly feeling of Margolis's landscapes arises in part from the subversion of this correlation of tactile quality with visual information. The appearance of the leaves in the overhanging tree in #114 Rochester belies what we know to be the material nature of their substance. Instead, all the visual cues for texture make them "read" much more like feathers on a huge wing. The tree trunk in #64 Rochester is just too smooth and metallic to be easily reconciled with our experience of trees. Finally, the whole atmosphere of these scenes produces the feeling



that night is made of a different kind of stuff than day.

In Russell Drisch's hand-tinted images, purely optical entities, shadows and reflections, are not only given equal weight and recognition as things, they are also given equal volume and presence. At the same time real entities are neutralized pictorially by an egalitarian symmetry, or by being pushed off to the edge as in the Self-Portrait I. The shadow is at least as much the subject here as the photographer. Shadows and reflections are ordinarily and practically taken as "accidentals" of visual perception. We hardly ever look at them as opposed to the people and objects that cast them onto surfaces. Drisch's work uses color to re-mark these things, to put content where we ordinarily see only the space between other things.

Whereas Drisch's use of artificial color can be described in terms of re-marking perceptual and cognitive designations, Barbara Wilson and Kenneth Robbins are involved with a use of color designed to intensify the expressive quality of the image. In Wilson's work the descriptive function of the photographic trace is nearly lost, the pretense to objectivity nearly obliterated by the density of emotive and psychological overlay, reduction and filtering. Detail and information have been lost, altered, transformed, covered and colored by ink. These images are more like artificial dreams and memories than recreations of actual vision. They are personal objects belonging to an individual and private experience.

With Kenneth Robbins's pictures, we again have the feeling of being very far from a purely descriptive, objective, color perception. Color quality infuses what we see with a "feel," a state of mind. The image of a subject is made to coincide with a poetic vision of that subject by combining the representational accuracy of a photographic transparency with a hard colored ground.

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The range of interests, attitudes, and conceptions within this group of photographers precludes the possibility of drawing any generalizations or conclusions. This is indicative of current activity in photography. At every point between the exposure of a single frame of film and the selection of a particular print from the darkroom the medium demands a continuous checking and weighing of hunches, intuitions, hopes, and convictions against a profusion of mute and indifferent images. Some photographers will make and reject far more exposures than others; some will make and reject far more prints



of a single negative in the darkroom to achieve the desired picture.

Attitude and conception are revealed by pictures as surely as subject matter is chosen and displayed. The photographer stands behind his pictures as surely as he stands behind his camera.

This exhibition was organized by the Community Service staff of the Creative Artists Public Service Program (C.A.P.S.) and the Downtown Branch of the Whitney Museum of American Art. The catalogue essay is by Steven K. Poser.

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Photographs by 1977-78 C.A.P.S.\* Fellows

July 12- August 4, 1978

Checklist

All dimensions are in inches  
unless otherwise noted.

- J.S. CARTIER
1. Moving Clouds, Shadow Southern Utah, 1977  
Photograph  
11x 14  
Lent by the artist
  2. Early Morning Southern Utah, 1977  
Photograph  
11 x 14  
Lent by the artist
  3. Butte Near Hanksville Utah, 1977  
Photograph  
11 x 14  
Lent by the artist
- RUSSEL DRISCH
4. Element 2-1, 1977  
Photograph  
22x40  
Lent by the artist
  5. Element 2-2, 1977  
Photograph  
28 x 40  
Lent by the artist
  6. Self Portrait, 1976  
Photograph  
69 x 40  
Lent by the artist
- LOUIS FAURER
7. Times Square, 1948  
Photograph  
16 x 20  
Lent by the artist
  8. 14th Street, 1948  
Photograph  
16 x 20  
Lent by the artist

9. Pennsylvania Station, 1948  
Photograph  
16 x 20  
Lent by the artist
- CHRISTOPHER GEORGE
10. Apollo Theater, Fulton Street, Brooklyn, N.Y. April 1977  
Photograph, silver print  
12.7 cm x 10.2 cm  
Lent by the artist
  11. Shower, Key West Florida, 1977  
Photograph, silver print  
12.7cm x 10.2 cm  
Lent by the artist
  12. Air Line Diner, Astoria Queens, 1978  
Photograph, "c" print  
10.2 cm x 12.7 cm  
Lent by the artist
- RALPH GIBSON
13. Untitled, 1977  
Photograph  
14 x 11  
Lent by the artist
  14. Untitled, 1977  
Photograph  
14 x 11  
Lent by the artist
  15. Untitled, 1977  
Photograph  
14 x 11  
Lent by the artist

\* Creative Artists Public Service Program

- COLIN GREENLY  
16. DNA 1, 1978  
Presentation on photo emulsion  
17 x 23  
© Colin Greenly, 1978

17. DNA 2, 1978  
Presentation on photo emulsion  
17 x 23  
© Colin Greenly, 1978

18. DNA 5, 1978  
Presentation on photo emulsion  
17 x 23  
© Colin Greenly, 1978

- JAN GROOVER  
19. Orange Flowers, Red, Gray,  
Blue Still Life, 1977  
Photographs on board, 20x 30  
Lent by the artist

- ROGER HAILE  
20. Collaboration With Second  
Grade Children/(faces), 1978  
Photographs and pastel on paper  
42 x 31  
Lent by the artist

21. Collaboration With First  
Grade Children / (faces), 1978  
Photographs with pastel on paper  
Lent by the artist

- DAVID HORTON  
22. Views, Set 4; #7, 1976. #8, 1977  
Photographs  
15 x 24  
Lent by the artist

23. Views, Set 2: #3, 1976, #4 1977  
Photographs  
15 x 24  
Lent by the artist

24. Views, Set 5: #9, 1976, #10, 1977  
Photographs  
15 x 24  
Lent by the artist

- LEONARD JENSHEL  
25. Rt. 2- Berkshire Mountains  
Massachusetts, 1976  
Photograph  
16 x 20  
Lent by the artist

26. Brookline, Massachusetts, 1976  
Photograph  
16 x 20  
Lent by the artist

27. York Beach, Maine, 1977  
Photograph  
16 x 20  
Lent by the artist

- RICHARD MARGOLIS  
28. #64 Rochester, 1975  
Photograph  
14 x 18, Lent by the artist

29. #114 Rochester, 1976  
Photograph  
14 x 18  
Lent by the artist

30. #140 Stratford, 1977  
Photograph  
14 x 18  
Lent by the artist

- LAURENCE G. MILLER  
31. Memphis Tennessee, January 2,  
1977 (White Branches)  
"c" color photograph  
16 x 20  
Lent by the artist

32. Broadway, 1976 (Blue and Green  
Pants), 1976  
"c" color photograph  
16 x 20  
Lent by the artist

33. Cambridge, Mass. 1976  
(Dog and Fence)  
"c" color photograph  
16 x 20  
Lent by the artist

- DON MYER  
34. Untitled, 1976  
Silver print  
16 x 20  
Lent by the artist

35. Untitled, 1976  
Silver print  
16 x 20  
Lent by the artist

36. Untitled, 1976  
Silver print  
16 x 20  
Lent by the artist

LILO RAYMOND

37. Bed, Amagansett, 1977  
Silver print  
20 x 16  
Lent by the artist

38. Door, Crete, 1973  
Silver print  
20 x 16  
Lent by the artist

39. Bed, Stratford, 1972  
Silver print  
20 x 16  
Lent by the artist

40. KENNETH ROBBINS  
Untitled #3  
Hand - tinted photograph  
Lent by the artist

41. Brothel Fantasy #1, 1976  
Hand- tinted photograph  
20 x 16  
Lent by the artist

42. After the Flood #2, 1977  
Hand-tinted photograph  
20 x 16  
Lent by the artist

DOUGLAS SANDHAGE

43. Honda Colombia, 1976  
Photograph  
17 x 23  
Lent by the artist

44. Silvia Colombia, 1976  
Photograph  
17 x 23  
Lent by the artist

45. Cuenca Ecuador, 1976  
Photograph  
17 x 23  
Lent by the artist

MARTIN SCHNEIDER

46. Emphysema - Dehydration  
to 65 Lbs. --Dying -- My  
Father  
Photograph  
20 x 30  
Lent by the artist

47. Pollution Death Day, 1976  
Photograph  
20 x 30  
Lent by the artist

48. Pollution Pieta, 1953  
Photograph  
20 x 16  
Lent by the artist

BARBARA WILSON  
49. Syl and Becky, 1977  
Photo silkscreen  
17 x 22  
Lent by the artist

50. Purple, 1976  
Photo silkscreen  
17 x 22  
Lent by the artist

51. In the Kitchen  
Photo silkscreen  
17 x 23

SHAWN WALKER  
52. Untitled  
Photograph  
13 x 11, Lent by the artist

53. Untitled  
Photograph  
13 x 11  
Lent by the artist

54. Untitled  
Photograph  
13 x 11  
Lent by the artist

#### LECTURES:

July 19 - Barbara Wilson  
July 26 - Martin Schneider  
August 2 - David Horton

